

The development and socialization of aggression in the first five years of life

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What we know about aggressive behavior in the first years of life

- Emerges early: pulling hair at 5 months in response to frustration (Landy & Peters, 1992); pushing others at 17 months (Tremblay et al., 1999)
- Sufficient variability in the frequency and intensity of aggression in the first years of life
- Associations between problem behaviors in toddlerhood and later aggression and disruptive behavior (e.g., Keenan et al., 1998)

What we don't know about aggressive behavior in the first years of life

- How early can we identify children who are likely to continue to have problems with aggression
- How do we best define atypical aggression over the first five years of life
- Most aggressive toddlers do not develop significant behavior problems - how to improve prediction

Challenges in studying the development of aggression in the first five years of life

- Problem: Rapid change in social, emotional and cognitive functioning

Solution: Focus on key components of development that are relevant for aggression

- Problem: Differentiating typical from atypical levels or forms of aggression may be difficult given the higher base rates of aggression relative to older children

Solution: Test utility of existing methods; modify or develop new methods

- Problem: Most etiological models of aggression do not incorporate the first few years of life

Solution: Propose new ones

Key components of development in the first years of life that are relevant to aggression

- Develop behavioral control (e.g., inhibit impulses, delay of gratification, distraction)
- Manage negative emotions (e.g., constructively express frustration, anger, and sadness)
- Develop empathy (e.g., understand emotional experience of others)

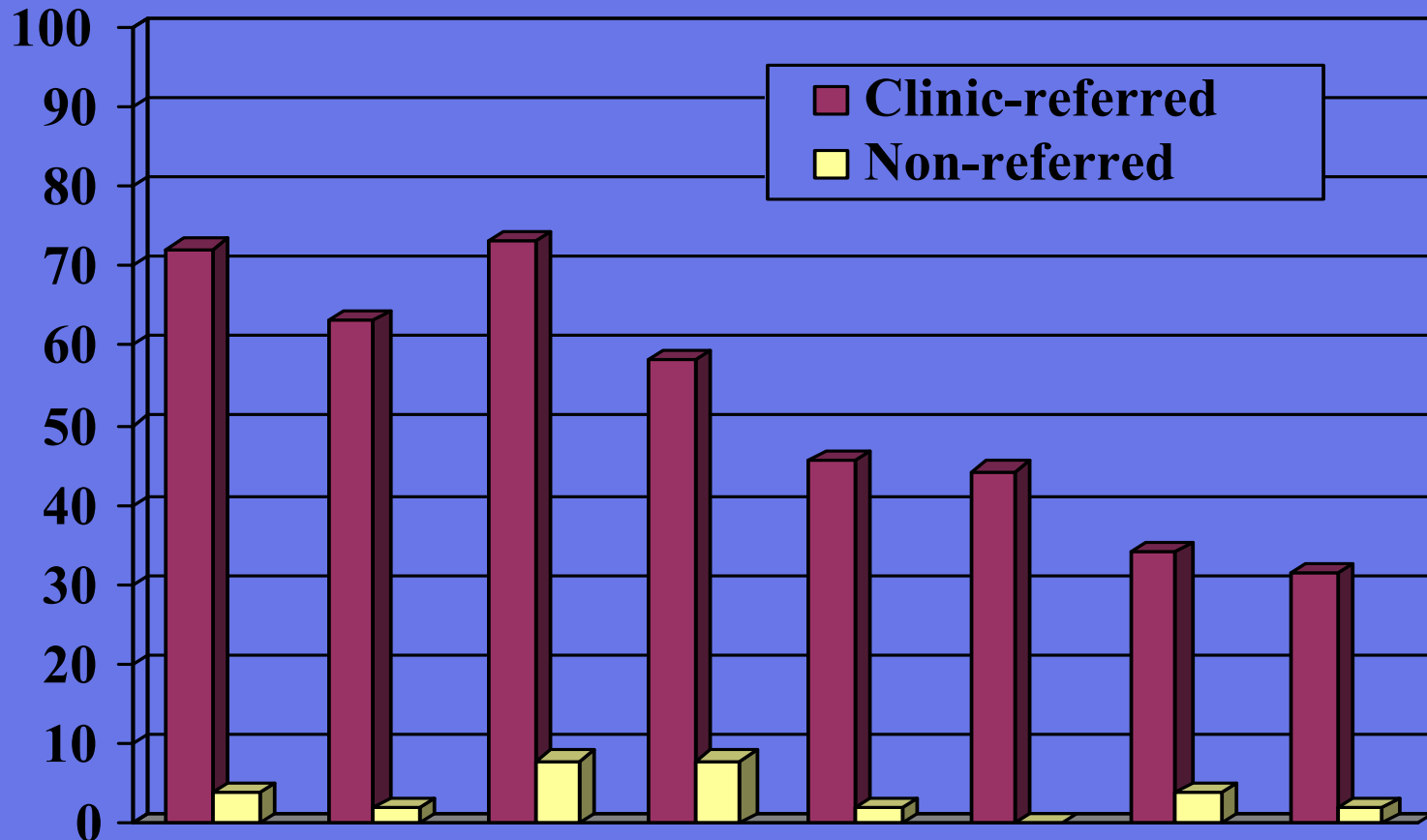
Key components of socialization in the first years of life that are relevant to aggression

- Support greater behavioral control (e.g., physical containment, consequences for aggression, provide means for distraction, provide structure)
- Support constructive management of negative emotions (e.g., labeling feelings, linking feelings to experience, developing coping strategies)
- Develop empathy (e.g., explain links between behavior and emotional experience of others, acts of reparation, consequences for aggressive behavior)

Utility of DSM-IV for identifying atypical aggression in young children

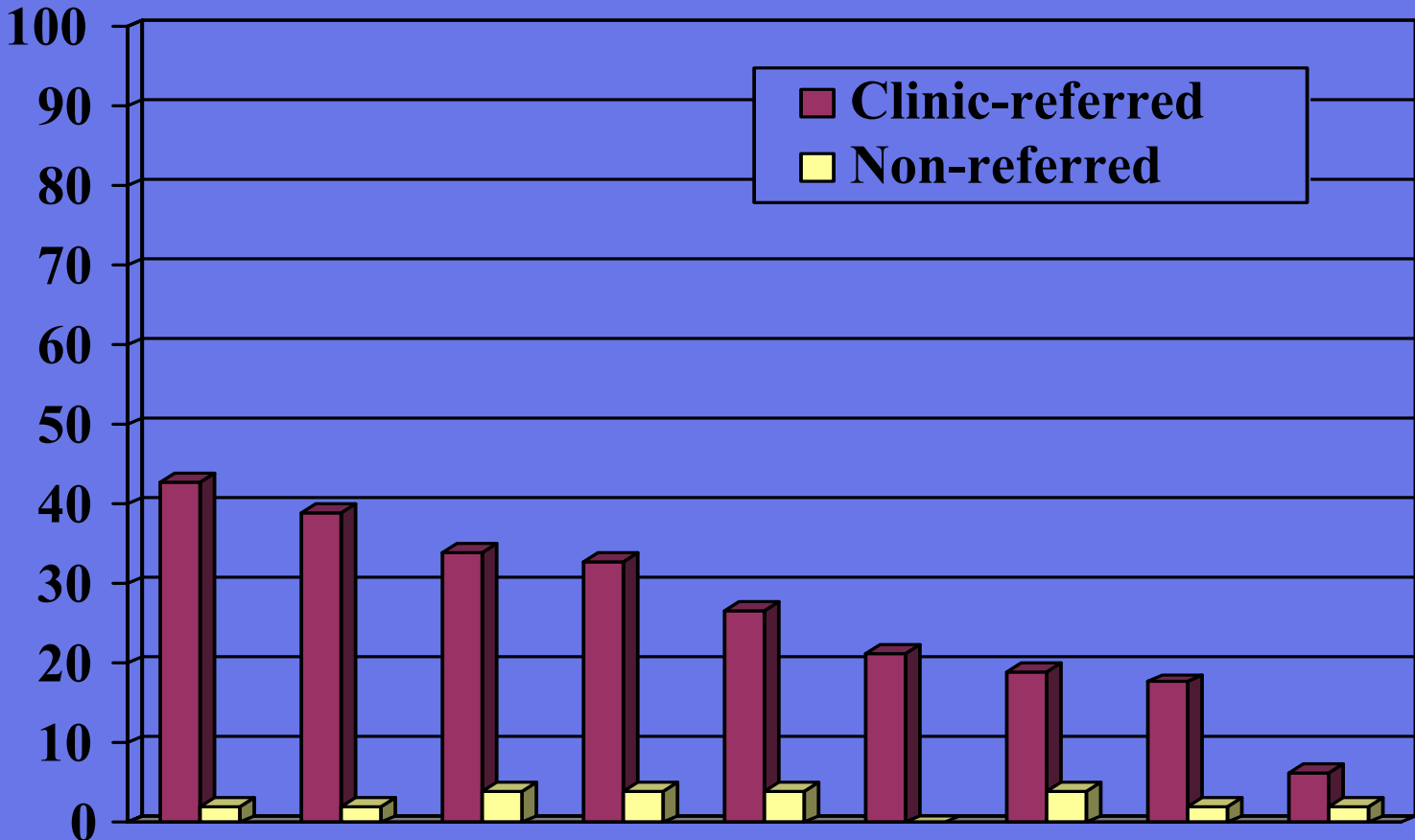
- Differentiation of referred and non-referred children
- Similar patterns of frequency of symptoms as in older children
- Content validity

Rates of oppositional defiant symptoms in clinic-referred and non-referred preschoolers



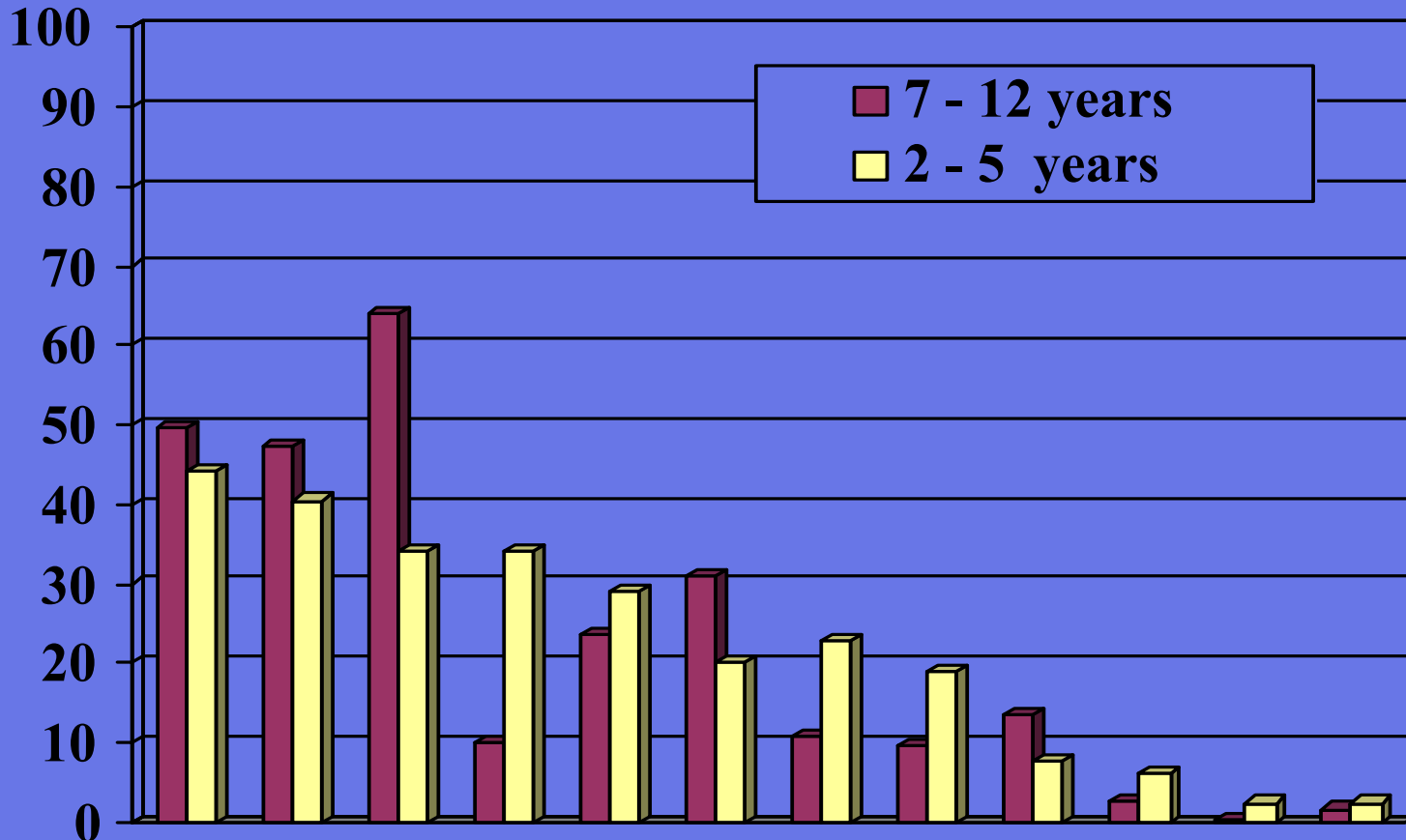
By chi-square analysis: all comparisons significant

Rates of conduct symptoms in clinic-referred and non-referred preschoolers



By chi-square analysis: all comparisons significant with the exception of fire setting

Rates of conduct symptoms in clinic-referred and non-referred preschoolers



By chi-square analysis: all comparisons significant with the exception of fire setting

Content validity of ODD & CD in clinic referred preschoolers from low-income environments

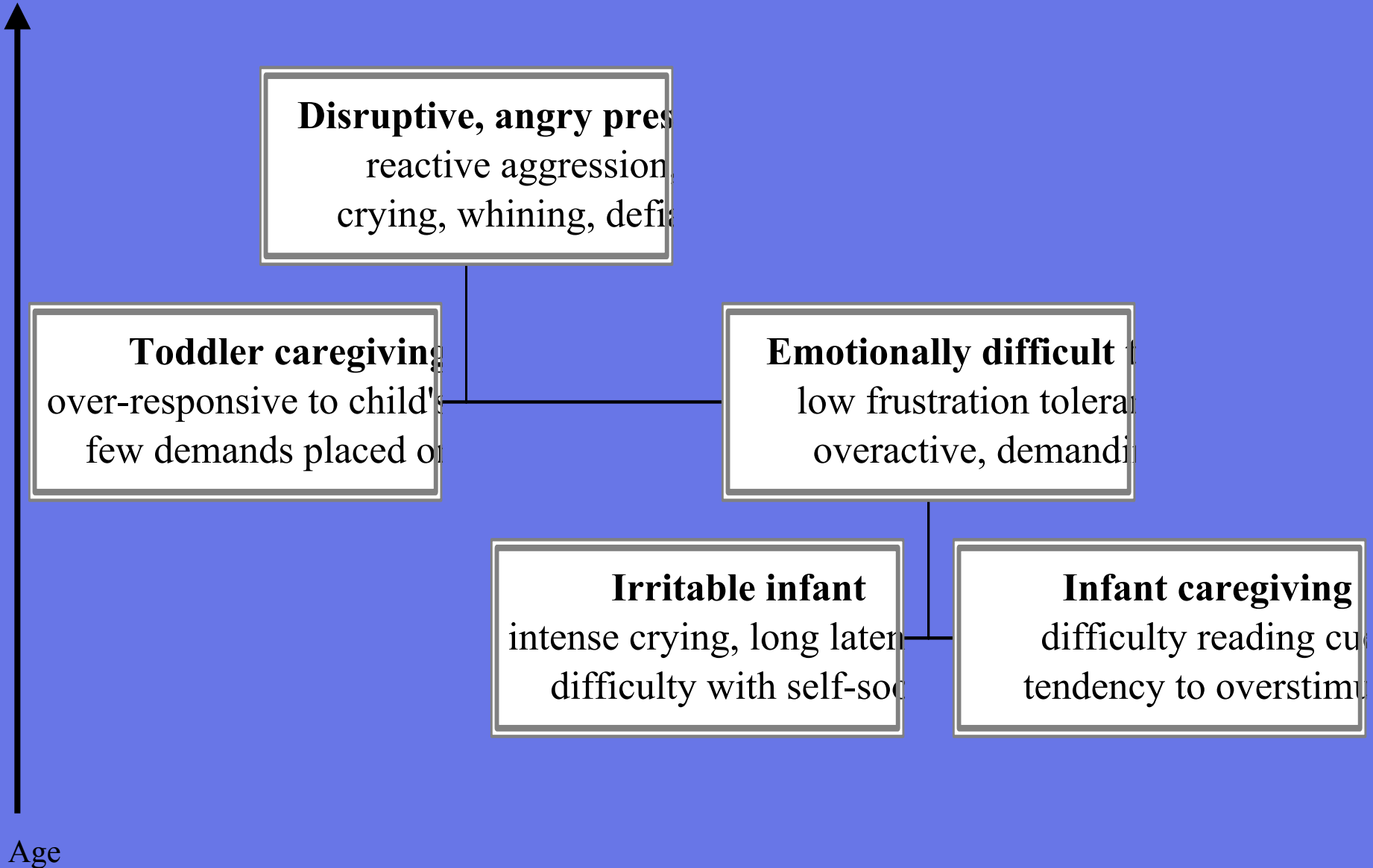
	<u>Controls</u>		<u>ODD</u>		<u>CD</u>	
	(n=49)		(n=20)		(n=33)	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
C-GAS	68.3	6.1	49.7	7.7^a	44.1	7.3^{a,b}
CBCL Ext. T	49.7	9.4	70.4	8.4^a	74.1	12.4^a
Noncompliance	1.3	0.7	1.5	0.7	2.0	1.2^a
Destructiveness	1.0	0.1	1.1	0.3	1.3	0.7^a
Aggression	1.0	0.2	1.0	0.0	1.3	0.8^a

Significant differences tested by Scheffe's test: ^a significantly different from controls;
^b significantly different from ODD

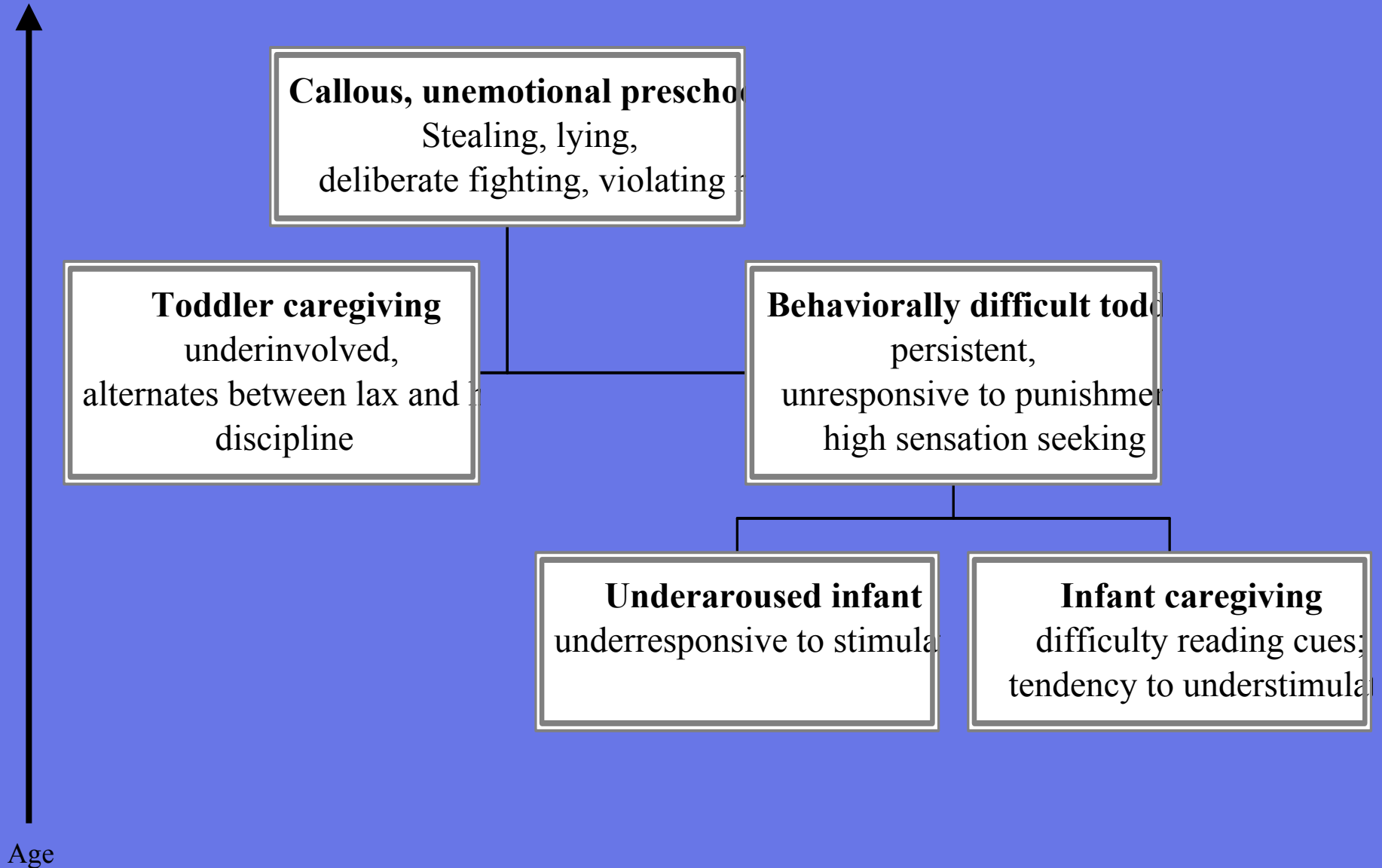
Etiologic theories of aggression that incorporate the first years of life

- Operationally define infant and toddler behaviors that may be precursors to aggression
- Operationally define socialization practices that are hypothesized to affect such precursors
- Allow for continuity and discontinuity

Pathway to reactive antisocial behavior



Pathway to proactive antisocial behavior



Developmental model from the prenatal environment to preschool

